

## Pack A Safe Lunch For Your Kids

Most kids can't wait for lunch time. A healthy lunch provides the fuel kids need to make it through the school day; however if it is not prepared and stored safely, it can put your kids at risk of food borne illness. There are four basic food safety principles that when followed can help you prepare safe meals for your family.

### These principles include:

- **Separating** raw and ready to eat foods while shopping, storing, preparing and serving.
- **Cleaning** all food contact surfaces and utensils, washing all produce before preparation and eating, washing your hands before handling foods, between raw and prepared products, and before eating.
- **Cooking** all foods thoroughly to the recommended temperatures and then ensuring they remain above 60°C (140°F) until served.
- **Chilling** foods quickly in shallow containers and keeping cold foods cold below 4°C (40°F).

If you are sending leftovers from the previous day, ensure those foods were cooled quickly and stored covered in the refrigerator. Never partially cook foods, as this practice is unsafe and may allow harmful bacteria and their toxins to grow in your food. If you are sending a hot lunch, ensure that you reheat to the original recommended cooking temperature and then place foods in a pre-warmed thermos to keep foods hot. Keep perishable foods such as eggs, meat, cheese and yogurt cold.

This can be achieved by making sandwiches the night before and keeping them refrigerated before they go into the lunch box. The addition of an ice pack or frozen juice box will help keep the food cold. Some foods can be placed in the lunch box frozen and will thaw in time for lunch.

Encourage your child to wash their hands throughout the day, but especially before eating. When your child returns home with their lunch box, discard any perishable foods that your child has not consumed if the food has been out of the refrigerator during the school day. Wash and sanitize lunch containers daily.

It just makes sense to handle your food safely.